

CCSS Newsletter

Connecticut Cactus and Succulent Society

October 2009

From the President

THE SEPTEMBER MEETING WAS QUITE A TREAT. THE DISPLAY areas at Quackin' Grass Nursery, in Brooklyn, really are a small botanical garden hidden away in the quiet corner of Connecticut. The highlight for many in our crowd was probably the sprawling rock garden full of cacti, succulents and other drought-tolerant plants, but the whole place was full of beautiful specimens of rare and unusual hardy plants. Thanks again to **Wayne Paquette** for hosting the Connecticut Cactus and Succulent Society's September meeting and leading an informative tour.



David Schultz has good news . . .

David Schultz has good news about the 2010 show and sale, which Naugatuck Valley Community College will be able to host, after all. Let us not get too comfortable, though: it would not hurt to have contacts with possible alternate venues, and we need to start looking into a location for the 2012 Eastern Conference.

Our October meeting will be hosted by **Judy Becker** at Lauray of Salisbury. Judy will give us a presentation on *Sinningia*, a genus of tuberous plants in the African violet family.

In November, we will meet at the Golden Age of Trucking Museum in Middlebury, where **Fred Kattermann** will talk about his explorations of Baja California. Our holiday party in December is tentatively planned for Bridgeport's Beardsley Zoo.

Thank you,
Matt Opel
President

The Secretary's Report

Our September meeting took us to the northeast corner of Connecticut—about 10 miles from the Rhode Island border. This was nice for those who live nearby and who usually have to travel a far ways west, even to New York state. There were 23 of us there, including one from the Massachusetts club.



Wayne Paquette's Quackin' Grass Nursery is a grand place.

Wayne Paquette's Quackin' Grass Nursery is a grand place. He has a large variety of plant types including trees, shrubs, tiny rock garden plants, and, of course, succulents. After we ate in his barn/office, he took us on a tour, answering many questions, and telling us little known facts about many of the plants we saw.

Thank you Wayne for having us.

Respectfully Submitted,
Becky Lynn
Secretary

The Tale of the Red Hand

By Matt Opel, Ph.D.



One of the few "true" ghost stories that I know happens to have a botanical and succulent plant theme. As with all true ghost stories, it happened to a friend of a friend—who shall remain nameless—many years ago, and has certainly changed with each telling, probably in significant ways, to turn it into a satisfying narrative, and to make it more frightening and inexplicable. I do not for a moment think that the cold, high veld around Sutherland is really

The Tale is continued on next page.

The Tale *continued from previous page.*

haunted by a shambling lich or some other, less describable terror from beyond. But still, I will be tempted to double-check the windows the next time I park my car to take a nap after a long drive.

The sight was unsettling, ghosts or no, . . .

Sutherland is far back in the mountains to the northeast of Cape Town, South Africa. I recall flying over the area on the way to the Fairest Cape one July—at the height of the southern winter—and glimpsing a dimly lit, snow-covered landscape through a break in the clouds. The sight was unsettling, ghosts or no, for someone fresh from summer in New England and contemplating a month of camping in the desert. Sutherland is one of the coldest places in Africa, with rocky plains in every direction sparsely vegetated with low scrub and hardy little succulents.

A certain respected South African botanist was doing fieldwork around Sutherland in the middle of winter.



The Old English Cemetery, Sutherland.

Photo via Kambrokind Guest House
<http://www.sutherlandinfo.co.za>

Photo provided by Matt Opel, Ph.D.

At the end of a long day of driving, hiking and collecting specimens, he found himself on a little-used road, miles from nowhere, and decided to park, get some rest, and continue plant hunting in the morning. After supper out of a can, heated on a camp stove by the side of the road, he decided that the weather was going to be too frosty for sleeping under the stars. So, he got into the car, reclined the seat, and got settled in his sleeping bag.

The Tale *continued on next page.*

The Connecticut Cactus and Succulent Society

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The CCSS Newsletter is published each month except January. Annual membership of \$12.00 includes subscription to the newsletter. This membership includes all members of an immediate family residing at the same residence. Payment is payable to the Treasurer, Mr. Ken Mosher, 8 Bailey Road, Andover, CT 06232.

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Treasurer's Report

Income:	
Auction	\$28.00
Dues	<u>24.00</u>
Total Income:	\$52.00
Expenses:	
September Newsletter	\$82.59
Trucking Museum Deposit	50.00
Food Supplies Reimbursement	<u>18.05</u>
Total Income (Expense)	(\$98.64)
Bank Balance	\$9,310.59



The Tale *continued from previous page.*

The temperature was bitterly cold that night—by African standards if not by the standards here in Connecticut—and the botanist closed the windows tight, and wore his jacket inside of the sleeping bag. The chill was still uncomfortable, and he was awake for some time before falling into an uneasy sleep.

Nervously, he looked around the car, and saw a disembodied hand . . .



Some time after midnight, he awoke with the feeling that he was no longer alone. Nervously, he looked around the car, and saw a disembodied hand—emaciated, a deep, bloody red and faintly internally phosphorescent—reaching for him from out of the dark, right inside of the cab with him. He just about leapt out of his sleeping bag in a panicked attempt to escape the hand, but the spectral visitor vanished almost as soon as it was seen.

There are a number of possible explanations for the Red Hand: certainly, people commonly experience strange and sometimes realistic hallucinations when emerging from troubled sleep. One cannot entirely rule out the actions of living humans, though the area was very remote, and the blasted, treeless landscape did not offer many places where a thief could have hid when the frightened botanist searched the area around his car. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the incident was this: the night was frigid and the botanist was certain that he had closed the windows to keep out the wind before going to sleep. But afterwards, he found that the window in the direction from which the hand had approached was rolled down part of the way. ○

Dr. Matt Opel, the president of the CCSS, is Curator at the UConn EEB Plant Growth Facilities in Storrs, Connecticut.

From the Bookshelf

By David Schultz

Timber Press will be publishing *Succulent Container Gardens* by **Debra Lee Baldwin** in January, 2010. She is the author of *Designing with Succulents* which many of you will have seen. This book can be included in our annual group order. It will be hardcover, 258 pages, full-color throughout and 7 5/8" × 9 1/4" size. List price is \$29.95 and our price will be \$21.00 (or slightly less depending on the size of our order).

The Show Will Go On!

By David Schultz

We have worked out details with the Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC) and our 27th Annual Show and Sale will again be held there next April 9–11, 2010. We will most likely have pool tables in the cactus show portion, but they will be covered and protected so that we will use them as a show bench. The pool tables are already moved into the space, so the only question is whether they move them out as opposed to protecting them. We will be able to work around them, so this is not a problem. The details will be in upcoming newsletters, but will remain essentially the same as in the past.

I have contacted Middlesex College, Post University, Tunxis Community College, and still have Manchester Community College to contact. Post and Middlesex will not be able to host the show and sale as the event is too large for them. The facilities at Tunxis would actually work and would have some advantages as well as disadvantages over NVCC. The president of Tunxis will work with us and waive the rental fee. We would have a commitment for the grant as well as overtime for security and maintenance. It is certainly worth considering depending on the communication and coordination regarding combining the Eastern Conference with the show and sale for 2012. I will still contact Manchester Community College to check those facilities and possibilities. We should continue examining alternative spaces so that we have options if things do not continue to work out at NVCC. ○

Free Pots

By David Schultz

I will bring free pots to the next meeting for club members to pick up and use for plants to bring for the free plants at the show and the club sales table. These are used pots, probably all 3-inch, so they will have to be washed. I also have new pots to sell: 3-inch, 3 1/2-inch, 4-inch and 5-inch.

I have a full case (504) of both the 3-inch and 3 1/2-inch pots that I will sell at half the wholesale price. The 4-inch and 5-inch are not full cases.

I will not bring all of them to the meeting unless someone calls to order them.



Directions to Lauray of Salisbury

Salisbury is in the far northwestern corner of Connecticut.

1. Get onto Route 44 at a point most convenient for you.
2. When you reach the town of Salisbury, take Route 41 north for 3.6 miles. Lauray of Salisbury is on the left.
(See map, below.)

Upcoming Events

Sunday, October 4: The October meeting will be held at Lauray of Salisbury, 432 Under Mountain Road, Salisbury, Connecticut. (860) 435-2263

Judy Becker will give us a presentation on *Sinningia*, a genus of tuberous plants in the African violet family.

1:00 PM

Bring Chairs

Entrées: T-Z

Appetizers/Sides/Salads: A-G

Desserts: H-S

Sunday, November 1: The November meeting will be held at the Golden Age of Trucking in Middlebury, Connecticut.

